

Remember Safety When Handling Pesticides—From Beginning To End

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Increased public awareness of the environment has meant new and complex responsibilities for today's professional golf course superintendent—and federal, state and local governments have stepped up their scrutiny of rules and regulations controlling pesticide usage. During its first year of publication, *Briefing* has addressed many of these laws and their impact on maintenance practices. Always paramount in this coverage, however, has been the recognition that the health and safety of golf courses should remain primary concerns for every superintendent.

In addressing those concerns, and in looking back over the first year of *Briefing*, here are some basic thoughts to keep in mind when handling pesticides:

When using pesticides as a part of your overall maintenance program, remember that safety and regulatory compliance go hand-in-hand. Make sure that everyone involved in your operation is aware of the safety considerations of each task he or she performs. Integrate these considerations into your hazard communications training program.

Scrutinize the packaging of pesticides you purchase and properly document each delivery. Look for water-soluble packaging, which means fewer containers for disposal. Consider higher-percent active ingredients materials and mini-bulk containers to reduce the amount of material needed and the number of times it is handled. When you receive pesticides from your distributor, make sure that an up-to-date material safety data sheet [MSDS] is provided for each product. Some superintendents now specify on their purchase orders that delivery will be refused unless the product is accompanied by an MSDS.

ALWAYS read the label. Pesticide labels contain vital information that educates you and your employees on handling, application and disposal of the product. NEVER allow a product to remain in your facility without a label—if a box or carton must be split up, be sure to re-label any container that will store excess product.

Store your pesticides safely. The Environmental Protection Agency has proposed new rules governing the storage of hazardous substances, including turf chemicals. These rules include requirements that pesticides be stored in a building that is securely locked, has an impervious floor, is properly ventilated and is in compliance with local fire codes. As a groundwater protection measure, make sure that all drains located within storage facilities can be quickly and easily plugged in the event of a spill or fire. Remember to separate turf chemicals by type [insecticide, herbicide, fungicide, etc.] to prevent accidental misuse or contamination. Make sure that you check often for any signs of container corrosion or leaks. Finally, post the telephone numbers of your local fire department, state environmental agency and spill response team in a conspicuous place within your storage facility and make sure your employees are trained in proper spill procedures.

Exercise extreme caution when mixing and loading turf chemicals. Federal and state regulations require, at a minimum, that either a certified applicator handle or apply restricted-use pesticides or that a certified applicator directly supervise a non-certified worker. GCSAA strongly recommends that only properly trained pesticide applicators be allowed to handle and apply pesticides. Certified applicators, because of the education they

receive, are knowledgeable about label requirements and are trained to safeguard against pesticide misuse, accidents and injuries. NEVER mix turf chemicals near a well and make sure that any drains in proximity to the mixing or loading area are in proper working order and flow into a catch basin. Personnel involved in the mixing and loading operation should be properly clothed and equipped with appropriate safety gear.

NEVER dispose of pesticides or pesticide waste down a drain, sink or sewer, or into a well, lake, pond or lagoon. Protection of groundwater and surface water is a primary concern in using pesticides. When possible, recycle pesticide wastes. If possible, field-apply diluted pesticide rinsate to reduce stored hazardous waste. Properly dispose of unusable products right away—don't procrastinate. Triple-rinse or pressure-rinse containers as soon as they are empty. Do not reuse a pesticide container unless it is specifically designed for that purpose.

Basic concepts in pesticide safety are often easy to forget. It's even easier to take for granted that all of your employees have the same knowledge base as you. A primer such as this is an excellent tool to use with both new employees and experienced workers who need a quick "refresher" to bring home key points. Take a few moments to review these simple reminders with your staff—it can help ensure the safety of your employees, your golfers, your community and your environment.

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